

# Life Remodeled fosters transparent, high-impact culture

**BY SHERRI WELCH**

Life Remodeled developed an operating system to foster a transparent and high-impact culture, something that is helping it achieve measurable impact and recruit and retain high-performing staff.

Through the system, Life Remodeled said it is able to clearly communicate its mission and core values, future plans and the steps needed to get there. That's helping add clarity to the number of employees it needs and job requirements as it hires new employees.

That clarity and transparency are also providing motivation for its existing staff of 11 full-time employees and six contract staff, said Life Remodeled, which is working to rebuild Detroit neighborhoods, one at a time, through home repairs, neighborhood cleanups and repurposing former school buildings into community centers.

Attracting and retaining the right people to the right seats in the organization is the foundation of the model, CEO Chris Lambert said.

Life Remodeled is offering a flexible work environment for staff and competitive compensation and benefits, including: 12 paid holidays and three weeks of vacation, health benefits with limited out-of-pocket costs, a 401(k) plan, short-term disability insurance, leadership training, professional development opportunities and salaries that are well over the 50-percent median mark reported by the Michigan Nonprofit Association.

In seeking new employees, Life Remodeled said it seeks candidates of



**Life Remodeled staff, Donald Eric Hudson (back row, from left), security; Kenneth Lassiter, security; Horace Cofield, security. Audrey Cox (second row from back), Development associate; Kristen Yandora, finance director; Stepha'N Quicksey, Youth and Community Engagement director; Jake Williams, maintenance supervisor; Robin Hudson, security. Diallo Smith (second row, from left), COO; Grant Howington, bookkeeper; Brandi Haggins, DIS director; Chris Lambert, CEO and founder; Omari Taylor, chief development officer; Brooke Adams, Philanthropy director; Rhonda Evans, marketing director. Terri Stewart (front row, from left), Opportunity and Events navigator; Kelsey Kneebone, Six Day Project manager at Durfee Innovation Society in Detroit. | NIC ANTAYA CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS**

color to better reflect the Detroit demographic it serves. Black talent now accounts for 50 percent of its staff and nearly three-quarters of its leadership team.

## Keeping track

The new system is aimed at getting

all staff on the same page on the vision, long-term plan, goals and strategy to get there.

Operating on a \$2.4 million budget, Life Remodeled hired a new chief operating officer to drive the initiative and ensure all processes were clear and followed by all employees.

Under the new system, which was

developed with an outside business operations consultant, Life Remodeled's leadership team meets quarterly to refine strategic goals and update a simplified strategic planning document that creates clarity around quarterly priorities, financial goals and key measurables such as the number of people served, academic

outcomes, and nonprofit and for-profit tenant occupancy in the Durfee Innovation Society community center it has developed in a former elementary-middle school in Detroit.

Organizational information is tracked in a shared project management system, Monday.com, which allows all team members to view information in real time. The dashboard provides transparency and accountability and enables employee autonomy, while also serving as a source of encouragement for staff to hit goals, the organization said.

When it implemented the new operating system in 2019, Life Remodeled said it initially saw some employee push back about implementing best-practice business principles in a nonprofit organization and some turnover, as individual work outcomes became more apparent. But it has created a dedicated team of employees today, Life Remodeled said.

As part of goal assessment, the nonprofit said it also seeks feedback from employees to determine the effectiveness of the organization's leaders.

It credits the new operating systems with significantly increasing its achievement of goals. Staff reached 96 percent of goals in the second quarter of 2022, increasing fundraising and the number of people served, among other accomplishments, it said, noting achieved goals are celebrated at quarterly meetings.

Contact: [swelch@crain.com](mailto:swelch@crain.com); (313) 446-1694; @SherriWelch